(a) whether it is a fact that Indian Overseas Bank has issued any instruction to deduct Rs.10/- from each depositor without any reasons particularly in Sector-12, R..K. Puram, New Delhi;

(b) if so, the details thereof and reasons therefor;

(c) whether it is also a fact that after the computerization of said Bank, the Bank is not entering passbook from 1st January, 2008 onwards and also direct the depositor to submit again opening account form;

(d) if so, the details thereof and the action taken by Government in this regard; and

(e) by when all the depositors will be getting new passbook without submitting any opening form?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL) : (a) and (b) Indian Overseas Bank (IOB) has designed a product for providing personal accident cover of Rs.I lakh for all individuals of active Savings Bank/Current Deposit (SB/CD) account holders. The bank has tied up with United Insurance Company Ltd. for the purpose and scheme has been implemented all over India in all the branches-of the bank as value addition to all SB/CD account holders for a nominal premium of Rs. 10 per annum. The bank had issued a circular to all the branches to display the scheme details on the branch notice board for the knowledge of the customers. The details are also made available in bank's *website www.job.in*. This product was well received by the public. So far, the bank has received 108 claims of which 40 claims have been settled by United India' Insurance Co. Ltd. However, strict instructions were issued to branches to refund the premium of Rs.10/-, if any customer was unwilling or objected to the debit.

(c) to (e) The Bank has reported that the branch has not requested customers to submit fresh account opening form. However, on the basis of a directive from Reserve Bank of India, the bank has been requesting all those existing customers who have earlier not submitted duly filled Know Your Customer (KYC) form to do so. The bank has also informed that the branch has been updating the pass books of customers regularly. In the event of the printer being under repair, pass books are being updated immediately after the printer is set right. Further as and when the pages in the existing pass book are exhausted, customers are immediately given a new pass book.

Withdrawal from employees pension scheme

1595. MS. SUSHILA TIRIYA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government proposes to tighten norms for withdrawal from Employees Pension Scheme;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether there has been resentment from employees union and other bodies against this move; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL) : (a) to (d) There is no such proposal under consideration to tighten the norms for withdrawal from Employees' Pension Scheme, 1995. However, in order to address the increasing actuarial deficit in

the Pension Fund, the following amendments have been carried out in the Employees' Pension Scheme, 1995:

(i) The 'reduction factor' for early vesting of Pension has been increased from 3% to 4% under para 12(7) of the Scheme.

(ii) Provisions of communication and 'Return of Capital' under para 12A and para 13 respectively of the Scheme have been deleted.

The issue was also discussed in the meeting of Central Board of Trustees (Employees' Provident Fund) where the representatives of Employers and Employees presented their view points.

Further, a Committee comprising representatives of Employers and Employees besides Actuary is also reviewing the whole Scheme for its viability in the long run.

Position of foreign exchange reserves

1596. SHRI KAMAL AKHTAR: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the present position of foreign exchange reserves in the country;

(b) whether there has been a decline in foreign exchange reserves in last six months; and

(c) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL) : (a) The foreign exchange reserves (including gold, Special Drawing Rights and Reserve Tranche Position) stood at US $247.69 billion as on November 30, 2008.

(b) and (c) The foreign exchange reserves were at US $ 247.7 billion as on November 30, 2008 compared to US $ 312.1 billion as on June 30, 2008. The fall in the foreign exchange reserves in the recent past has been due to the cumulative impact of Net Foreign Institutional Investment (FII) outflows as a result of the global financial crisis; trade outflows due to higher crude oil prices and import demand; revaluation losses due to strengthening of the US dollar against other major currencies; and intervention by the Reserve Bank of India in the foreign exchange market to smoothen exchange rate volatility.

Subsidy Bill

1597. SHRI N.K. SINGH : Will the Prime Minister be pleased to state:

(a) what was the total subsidy bill of Government on account of petroleum, fertilizer and food for 2007-08 and so far during the current year; and

(b) how does Government propose to fund the cost?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL): (a) and (b) The amount of subsidy on account of petroleum, fertilizer and food for 2007-08 and during the current year so far is given in the table below. These have been funded through budgetary grants.